

7. Glossary of Tuning terms

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Assessment

The total range of methods used to evaluate the learner's achievement in a course unit or module. Typically, these methods include written, oral, laboratory, practical tests/examinations, projects, performances and portfolios. The evaluations may be used to enable the learners to evaluate their own progress and improve on previous performance (formative assessment) or by the institution to judge whether the learner has achieved the learning outcomes of the course unit or module (summative assessment). See also **Continuous Assessment/Criterion Referenced Assessment**.

Assessment criteria

Descriptions of what the learner is expected to do and to what level, in order to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved and to what extent. The criteria are usually related to the cycle and/or level descriptors for the module being studied in the discipline concerned. They are normally presented to the students in course catalogues or similar documentation along with the intended learning outcomes, syllabus, etc., at the beginning of the course unit.

Cohort or class

A group of students that started a particular degree programme or course at the same time.

Competences

Competences represent a dynamic combination of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, knowledge and understanding, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills, and ethical values. Fostering these competences is the object of all educational programmes. Competences are developed in all course units and assessed at different stages of a programme. Some competences are subject-area related (specific to a field of study),

others are generic (common to any degree course). It is normally the case that competence development proceeds in an integrated and cyclical manner throughout a programme.

Contact hour

A period of 45-60 minutes of teaching/learning activity in which a staff member is engaged face to face with a learner or group of learners.

Continuing professional development/education

Continuing professional development (CPD) is the means by which people at work maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives. Some may wish to do this through undertaking a complete further degree programme, while others may opt to take specific modules or course units appropriate to their learning and professional interests. See also **Lifelong Learning**.

Continuous assessment

A system of assessment in which work is assessed throughout the programme or course unit and does not rest on a final examination. Marks achieved often contribute to a final overall mark the final assessment total for the student, either for the unit, the year of study or for the programme.

Convergence

Convergence involves the voluntary recognition and adoption of general policies for the achievement of common goals. Convergence in the architecture of national educational systems is pursued in the Bologna process. The Tuning Project seeks to identify points of convergence while recognizing and sharing knowledge about the variety of practice with broad agreed frameworks.

Course

Often used as a synonym for programme or course unit. Tuning has adopted the term programme to designate a complete programme of study leading to a degree, and course unit for smaller units of structured teaching and learning in such a programme.

Course unit

A self-contained, formally structured learning experience. It should have a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes, expressed in terms of competences to be obtained, and appropriate assessment criteria. Course units can have different numbers of credits, although it is recommended that units carry a uniform number of credits or a multiple thereof. These units, with thesis work and work placements where appropriate, are the building blocks of programmes.

Coursework

Coursework refers to the required - normally assessed - learning activities within a course unit or module.

Credit

The «currency» used to measure student workload in terms of the time required to achieve specified learning outcomes. It enables staff and students to assess the volume and level of learning, based on the achievement of learning outcomes and the associated workload measured in time.

Credit can be awarded to a learner in recognition of the verified achievement of designated outcomes at a specific level through work based learning or prior learning as well as through coursework. Credit cannot normally be lost once achieved, although in particular circumstances an institution can lay down that credits must have been awarded within a certain timeframe to be recognized as part of the study programme. This will be the case in subject areas where knowledge and skills are subject to rapid change, e.g. Informatics, Medicine, etc. See also **Student Workload and Intended Learning Outcomes**.

Credit accumulation

Credit accumulation is the process of collecting credits for learning within degree programmes. In a credit accumulation system a specified number of credits must be obtained in order to complete successfully a study programme or part thereof, according to the requirements of the programme. Credits are awarded and accumulated only when the successful achievement of the required learning outcomes is confirmed by assessment. Learners can use the credit accumulation system to transfer

or «cash in» credits achieved from work-based learning/different programmes within and between educational institutions. Credits are also transferable between programmes in the same institution, between different institutions within the same country, or internationally (often with certain limits about the proportion of the total that can be transferred). The process allows learners to study individual units and modules without immediately achieving an academic award, and also allows for the award of interim awards where students do not complete a full programme leading to the award of a degree. In every case it is the Institution that will award the degree that decides which credits earned elsewhere can be accepted as part of the work required for the degree.

Credit level

An indicator of the relative demands of learning and of learner autonomy in a given course unit or module. It is typically based on the complexity and depth of learning and is sometimes associated with the year of study (e.g. level 1/2/3 over a three year programme), or the type of course content. (e.g. Basic/Intermediate /Advanced).

Criterion-referenced assessment

In this form of assessment particular outcomes, i.e. knowledge, understanding, skills, abilities and/or attitudes are specified as criteria for «passing» the assessment. Criterion-referenced assessment can be associated with the desired and/or «threshold minimum» of the learning outcome to be achieved. In norm-referenced assessment learners are evaluated in relation to one another, usually within their cohort. The latter system of assessment, alone, is not compatible with competence based curricula.

Cycles

All European higher education qualifications are located within three cycles. One of the objectives indicated in the Bologna Declaration was the «adoption of a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate». Doctoral studies are now included in the Bologna structure and referred to as the third cycle.

Cycle (level) descriptors

Generic statements of the broad expected outcomes of each of the three cycles. A good example of general cycle (level) descriptors are the

so-called Dublin Descriptors, which have been developed by a group of experts, the Joint Quality Initiative. (JQI). These descriptors have served as one of foundations (along with ECTS) for the Framework For Qualifications Of The European Higher Education Area. See also **Dublin Descriptors, European Qualifications Framework** and **Level Descriptors**

Degree

A formal qualification awarded by a higher education institution after successful completion of a prescribed study programme. In a credit accumulation system the programme is completed through the accumulation of a specified number of credits awarded for the achievement of a specific set of learning outcomes.

Degree profile

A description of the character of a degree programme or qualification. This description gives the main features of the programme which are based on the specific aims of the programme, how it fits into the academic map of disciplines or thematic studies and how it relates to the professional world. Deciding to institute a new degree profile should normally be the outcome of a process of analyzing the needs of society combined with those of the specific subject area as well as the financial and personnel means which can be made available to establish the programme.

Diploma Supplement

The Diploma Supplement is an annex to the official qualification documentation which is designed to provide more detailed information on the studies completed according to an agreed format which is internationally recognised. For reasons of transparency and comparability it is important that this format, which has been drawn up by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES, be followed exactly.

Doctorate or doctoral degree

A qualification awarded after completion of third cycle study. It includes a substantial amount of original research work which is normally presented in a thesis.

Dublin descriptors

The Dublin Descriptors provide very general statements of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with awards that represent the end of a Bologna cycle. General level descriptors have been developed for the «short cycle within the first cycle» and the first, second and third cycle. The descriptors consist of a set of criteria, phrased in terms of competence levels, which enables to distinguish in a broad and general manner between the different cycles. The following five sets of criteria are distinguished:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding
- Applying knowledge and understanding
- Making informed judgements and choices
- Communicating knowledge and understanding
- Capacities to continue learning

The Dublin descriptors have been developed by an international group of experts, which has named itself the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI). The work of the JQI and Tuning is considered complementary by both parties.

ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System)

ECTS is a learner-centred credit system based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme of study and on the principle that 60 credits constitute the workload of a full-time student during one academic year. The student workload of a full-time study programme in Europe represents in most cases a student workload of around 1500 to 1800 hours per year. Credits are allocated on the basis of an official plan. If a study programme officially exceeds the normal length of an academic year more credits can be allocated. This might be the case for programmes at second cycle level. A «full calendar year» programme designed to require 50 to 52 weeks of full-time study (no summer holidays) might have credits up to 75 depending on the learning outcomes and associated workload.

As well as being a system for facilitating the mobility of students across Europe through credit accumulation and transfer, ECTS can also facilitate programme design and development, particularly in respect of overseeing the demands on students of concurrent course units.

European Qualifications Framework

A European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is an overarching framework that makes transparent the relationship between European national (and/or sectoral) educational frameworks of qualifications and the qualifications they contain. It is an articulation mechanism between national frameworks.

At present two European Qualifications Frameworks exist. One focuses on Higher Education and has been initiated as part of the Bologna Process, the other focuses on the whole span of education and has been initiated by the European Commission. The first framework is named *A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*, abbreviated as EQF. The second extends across all areas including that of higher education and is called *European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*, abbreviated as EQF for LLL.

The EQF for HE, adopted by the 45 countries participating in the Bologna Process, is a system that aims to:

- Enable learners (citizens, employers, etc.) across Europe to understand the full range and relationship between the various national, local and regional European higher education qualifications
- Promote access, flexibility, mobility, collaboration, transparency, recognition and integration (links) within, and between, European higher education systems.
- Defend diversity, in the content and delivery of educational programmes and therefore national, local, regional and institutional academic autonomy.
- Improve the competitiveness and efficiency of European higher education

See also **National Framework of Qualifications**.

Examination (Exam)

Generally a formal written or oral test taken at set points (e.g. end of a semester or term, mid-semester or term) or at the end of a programme, module or course unit.

Evaluation

Evaluation of teaching and academic studies in a subject or department and the related degree programmes comprises all those activities which aim at assessing quality and fitness for purpose and of purpose. Strengths and weaknesses of education and training can be identified by stocktaking, analysis and proposals formulated to ensure the sustainability of quality. Evaluation may be carried out through both internal and external procedures. Internal evaluation comprises the systematic collection of administrative data and obtaining feedback from staff, students and graduates, as well as holding structured conversations with lecturers and students. External evaluation may include visits by a review team to the department in order to review the quality of the academic studies and teaching, the use of external examiners, external accreditation, etc.

A significant element in enhancing quality is ensuring that internal and external procedures are used to improve student learning.

First cycle degree

A higher education qualification awarded after successful completion of first cycle studies which, according to the Bologna Declaration, should normally last a minimum of three years or 180 ECTS credits.

Grade/Mark

Any numerical or qualitative measure, based on well-defined criteria, which is used to describe the results of assessment in an individual module or course unit or in a complete study programme.

Higher education

Higher education applies to academic programmes of study that may be entered by students holding either an appropriate school leaving certificate from an upper secondary school or other relevant professional qualifications or approved prior learning and/or prior experience. Providers may be universities, universities of professional studies, higher education institutions, colleges, polytechnics etc.

Intended learning outcomes

Intended learning outcomes are statements —made by the academic staff— of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able

to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning. Learning outcomes must be accompanied by appropriate assessment criteria which can be used to judge whether the expected learning outcomes have been achieved. Learning outcomes, together with assessment criteria, specify the requirements for the award of credit, while grading is based on attainment above or below the requirements for the award of credit. Credit accumulation and transfer is facilitated if clear learning outcomes are available to indicate with precision the achievements for which the credit will be awarded.

Levels

Levels are understood to be a series of sequential steps to be taken by the learner (within a development continuum) expressed in terms of a range of generic outcomes, within a given programme.

Level descriptors

A level descriptor is a statement that provides an indication of the depth and extent of learning expected at a specific stage in a programme. They are a guide to the kind of demands or expectations it is appropriate to make of learners at each of the designated levels within a programme. The descriptors guide the learner, teacher and curriculum with respect to the complexity, relative demand and learner autonomy. These general descriptors can be applied to specific subject disciplines and ways of learning. Level descriptors are useful for curriculum design, assignment of credit, validation, guidelines for recognition of learning from experience and of non formal learning and for staff development.

Module

The term module has different meanings in different countries. In some it means a course unit; in others a module is a group of course units. For clarity, In Tuning the ECTS definition is used: A module is defined as a course unit in a system in which each course unit carries the same number of credits or a multiple thereof. See also **Course Unit**.

National framework of qualifications

A national framework of qualifications is a single description, at national level or level of an educational system, which is internationally under-

stood. The framework describes all qualifications awarded in the system considered and relates them to each other in a coherent way. One very clear example is that of the Republic of Ireland <http://www.nqai.ie/en/>. See also **Qualification Descriptors**.

Optional course unit

A course unit or module that may be chosen as part of a study programme but is not compulsory for all students. Some systems distinguish between *electives* (i.e. course units chosen from a pre-defined list) and *completely free* optional course units.

Qualification

Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognized programme of study.

Qualification descriptors

Generic statements of the outcomes of study for a qualification. They provide clear points of reference that describe the main outcomes of a qualification, as defined in the National Frameworks, and make clear the nature of change between levels.

Reference points

Non-prescriptive indicators that permit the comparison of degree programmes in particular at subject area level.

Resit examination (Exam)

Students who have not been able to take or who have not passed an examination or assessment on the first date scheduled may be offered the opportunity to take a resit examination or assessment at a later date. Where a resit examination is offered, the candidate is deemed to have passed or failed the examination *after* the results of the resit are known.

Second cycle degree

This is a higher education qualification awarded after the successful completion of second cycle studies that may involve some research work. It is

often referred to as a Master's degree. A student normally takes it after completion of a first degree.

Student workload

The time (expressed in hours) that it is expected that an average learner (at a particular cycle/level) will need to spend to achieve specified learning outcomes. This time includes all the learning activities in which the student is required to carry out (e.g. lectures, seminars, practical work, private study, professional visits, examinations).

Study programme

An approved set of modules or course units recognized for the award of a specific degree, which should be defined through the set of learning outcomes, expressed in terms of competences, to be achieved in order to obtain the specified credits.

Supervisor

Member of academic staff of the University who monitors the progress of a Doctoral candidate, provides advice and guidance, and may be involved in assessing the Thesis. See also **Thesis**.

Teaching & learning methods

A wide range of teaching techniques are used in universities. The set of teaching techniques strongly depends on the instructional form of education (face to face education, education by correspondence or distance education). The Tuning consultation revealed the following list (which is far from exhaustive):

- Lectures
- Seminar (small group teaching)
- Tutorials
- Research seminar
- Exercise classes or courses
- Workshops (classroom based practical classes)

- Problem-solving classes
- Laboratory teaching
- Demonstration classes
- Placement (internship/traineeship)
- Work based practice
- Fieldwork
- Distance learning (which may be paper based or ICT based)
- e-learning (which may be entirely on-line or 'blended' using other techniques and learning environments)

Such lists are indicative only, and are really a list of categories of teaching activity, since how each is undertaken may vary widely not only between academics but within the everyday practice of any one academic, depending on the focus of the teaching and the intended learning outcomes for the students.

As with teaching, a wide range of learning activities are used in universities. The following (inevitably partial) list of commonly used learning activities gives some idea of the richness that is possible teaching and learning.

- Attending lectures, seminars and tutorials, laboratory sessions
- Participating in problem solving classes
- Note-taking
- Conducting searches for relevant materials in libraries and on-line
- Surveying literature
- Reading and studying texts or other material
- Summarizing
- Conducting increasingly complex research/independent projects or group projects
- Practising technical, mathematical or laboratory skills
- Practising professional skills (e.g. in Nursing, Medicine, Teaching)

- Researching and writing papers, reports, dissertations of increasing difficulty (in terms of size and complexity of the material)
- Working with other students to co-produce a report/design/answer to a problem
- Preparing and making oral presentations, either in groups or individually
- Making constructive criticism of the work and others, and using the criticism of others productively
- Chairing and participating usefully in meetings (of seminar groups, for example)
- Leading or being collaborative members of teams

Thesis

A formally presented written report, based on independent research/enquiry/project work, which is required for the award of a degree (generally a first or a second degree or a doctorate). It may also be called a dissertation.

Tuning project

Tuning Educational Structures in Europe is a university driven project which aims to offer a universal approach to implement the Bologna Process at higher education institutional and subject area level. The Tuning approach contains a methodology to (re-)design, develop, implement and evaluate study programmes for each of the Bologna cycles. Furthermore, Tuning serves as a platform to develop reference points which are based on learning outcomes expressed in terms of competences. Tuning distinguishes generic and subject specific competences. The project is developing cycle (level) descriptors for a growing number of subject areas. Launched in 2000 and supported, financially and morally, by the European Commission, it covers now the vast majority of the Bologna signatory states, including the Ukraine and since 2006 the Russian Federation. A comparable project has been set up in 2003 for now 19 countries in Central- and South-America: Tuning América Latina. It is financially supported by the European Commission in the framework of the Alfa-project.

8. Glossary

The following glossary defines terminology for the purpose of this ECTS Users' guide.

Accumulation	The process of collecting credits awarded for achieving the learning outcomes of educational components or other learning activities.
Allocation of Credit	The process of assigning a number of credits to qualifications/ programmes or to other educational components.
Assessment	The total range of methods (written, oral and practical tests/examinations, projects and portfolios) used to evaluate learners' achievement of expected learning outcomes.
Assessment criteria	Descriptions of what the learner is expected to do, in order to demonstrate that a learning outcome has been achieved.
Award of Credit	The act of delivering learners the number of credits that are assigned to the component or a qualification. The award of credit recognises that learners' learning outcomes have been assessed and that the learner satisfies the requirements for the educational component or the qualification.
Competences	A dynamic combination of cognitive and metacognitive skills, knowledge and understanding, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills, ethical values and attitudes. Fostering competences is the object of all educational programmes. Competences are developed in all course units and assessed at different stages of a programme. Some competences are subject-area related (specific to a field of study), others are generic (common to any degree course). It is normally the case that competence development proceeds in an integrated and cyclical manner throughout a programme.
Condoning	Condoning is the term used in some national contexts when an examination board exempts a student from reassessment in a failed (or marginally failed) component if other related components are passed with sufficiently high grades.
Contact Hour	Hours (typically a period of 45-60 minutes) spent by students on activities guided by teaching staff.
Credit (ECTS)	Quantified means of expressing the volume of learning based on the workload students need in order to achieve the expected outcomes of a learning process at a specified level.
Cycle	All qualifications in the European Higher Education Area are located within three cycles. One of the objectives indicated in the Bologna Declaration in 1999 was the "adoption of a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate." In 2003 doctoral studies were also included in the Bologna structure and referred to as the third cycle.
Cycle (Level) Descriptors	Generic statements of the broad expected outcomes of each of the three cycles. A good example of general cycle (level) descriptors are the so-called Dublin Descriptors, which have served as one of the foundations (along with ECTS) for the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.
Educational Component	A self-contained and formally structured learning experience (such as: course unit, module, seminar, work placement).
Formal learning	Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.

Informal learning	Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or "incidental"/random).	An individual engaged in a learning process (formal, non-formal or informal learning).
Learner	An approach or system that supports the design of learning programmes which focus on learners' achievements, accommodate different learners' priorities and are consistent with reasonable students' workload (i.e. workload that is feasible within the duration of the learning programme). It accommodates for learners' greater involvement in the choice of content, mode, pace and place of learning.	Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of a process of learning.
Learning Outcomes	General statements of the typical achievement of learners who have been awarded a qualification at a certain level in a qualifications framework.	A course unit in a system in which each course unit carries the same number of credits or a multiple thereof.
Module	Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.	A set of educational components, based on learning outcomes, that are recognised for the award of a specific qualification.
Programme (educational)	The process which enables learners to pass from one stage of a qualification to the next and to access educational programmes that prepare for qualifications at a higher level than those he/she already possesses.	Set of rules that define conditions for learners' progression within qualifications and towards other qualifications.
Progression	Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognised programme of study.	The single description, at national level or at the level of an education system, which is internationally understood and through which all qualifications and other learning achievements in higher education may be described and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between higher education qualifications.
National Qualifications Framework (higher education)	The process or set of processes adopted nationally and institutionally to ensure the quality of educational programmes and qualifications awarded.	The process through which an institution certifies that learning outcomes achieved and assessed in another institution satisfy (some or all) requirements of a particular programme, its component or qualification.
Recognition of credit	The process through which an institution certifies that the learning outcomes achieved and assessed in another context (non-formal or informal learning) satisfy (some or all) requirements of a particular programme, its component or qualification.	Recognition of non-formal and informal learning
Student	Learner enrolled in a formal educational programme	Transfer
Workload	The process of having credits awarded in one context recognised in another context for purposes of obtaining a qualification.	Indication of the time students typically need to complete all learning activities (such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, self-study and examinations) required to achieve the expected learning outcomes